

No. XVIII.—THE RED-BREASTED GOOSE (*R. RUFICOLLIS*) IN MESOPOTAMIA.

I was out duck shooting with my party in the marshes at Abu Jisra on Sunday, the 17th instant and at the end of the day another party of two guns, whose bag for the day was 120 birds—my own personal bag being 64—brought me an uncommon bird for identification. It was a solitary bird and no others like it were seen. Never having seen the bird before, though I have shot in the Punjab and Bengal for 15 years and in this country for 5, I asked Flying Officer Crees who had shot it to let me take it back to Baghdad and identify it, which he allowed me to do. I first referred to the synoptical table in Finn's little book on ducks and soon got a clue and confirmed it with Stuart Baker's book as being a red-breasted goose, *Rufibrenta ruficollis*, in full plumage.

As this goose has not been reported as shot in this country before I have pleasure in informing you of it, but regret I cannot send you the skin as I know nothing about skinning and can get no one to do it properly for me.

I have shot and seen many geese, which, I consider, are dwarf geese and I am inclined to think they are more common than the lesser white-fronted goose which I do not appear to have shot at all or seen shot anywhere round Baghdad.

BAGHDAD,
19th February, 1924.

O. G. KIERNANDER, Major.

No. XIX.—A NOTE ON CANNIBALISM IN A GECKO.

I had occasion to visit Gurdaspur in the Punjab, in October-November 1918 in connection with work on Lantana insects and I stayed at the Rest House of the Government Agricultural Station. The cold was then gradually advancing and some time previously the caretaker had shut up the glasspanes for fear of the chill night air. The window had a wire gauze screen as well, in addition to shutters with glasspanes. One morning I observed that a fairly large-sized Gecko—which I then thought was *Hemidactylus leschenaultii*—had been imprisoned between the screen and the windowpane. It was evident it was not hibernating and it looked very much famished in appearance. Taking pity on the animal, I opened the window and released it, when it ran out. A few hours later, in the afternoon I met it running about actively on the beams along the ceiling of the verandah, and all at once I caught sight of it rushing at another smaller Gecko which looked very much like a halfgrown *Hemidactylus brookii*. In a moment it had caught it and in a short time it had begun to gulp it down its throat. I was not able to catch it with its prey as I had wished to and later on I had no opportunities of revisiting Gurdaspur.

From the remarks made in the paper "on the Reptilia and Batrachia of the Punjab Salt Range" in the Indian Museum Records, 1923, by Messrs. Hora and Chopra it is evident that the large Gecko, the assailant—was *H. flaviviridis* and not *H. leschenaultii* as I had supposed but I believed the prey was no other than *H. brookii*. Dr. Annandale assures me that *H. leschenaultii* does not occur in N. India. I wish to make a record of this observation, so as to know if similar incidents have been observed by other naturalists, since I have on another occasion noted *H. leschenaultii* trying to attack the young one of a *Lygosoma*.

COIMBATORE,
2nd April, 1924.

Y. RAMCHANDRA RAO,
Acting Government Entomologist.

[A fat-tailed Lizard (*E. macularius*) kept in captivity in the Society's rooms attacked and swallowed a young example of the same species which was put into its cage; two common skinks (*Mabuia carinata*) met with a similar fate. So far as it is possible to observe this lizard is an omnivorous feeder. Its diet includes biscuit crumbs, grasshoppers, cockroaches, spiders, scorpions, lizards and mice. An interesting comment on the age attained by these lizards is to be observed in the fact that the present specimen was presented to the Society in August 1915 and is still to-day, after 9 years, as live and vigorous as ever.—Eds.]

No. XX.—PYTHON AND MONITOR.

Some time ago Dr. Moorow-Campbell published an account, with a photograph, of a python which he had shot in the Southern Shan States and which contained a full-grown Gyi (or Barking Deer). The following incident however seems far more extraordinary and may be of interest as it would appear to be unique.

Early this month I was in the Mergui District of Lower Burma with a friend John D. and we were trying to reach the source of a tributary of the Little Tenasserim River in what is almost virgin jungle.

At the end of one day's march our coolies had just deposited their loads and were cutting bamboos to run up the rough shelters we were using at nights, as we were travelling light without tents. Some of the men were across the small stream we were following, when there came a cry of 'Mwe; Mwe; Mwe gyi', (snake, snake, a big snake !)

One naturally thought that they had put up some large snake which had gone off, but they insisted that it was still there, just on the bank of the stream, which here was a pool over waist deep. As it had not been frightened or disturbed apparently by all this noise I thought they had probably lighted upon a Hamadryad, as these are not uncommon in the south of Lower Burma, so put together a gun and went across.

From the junction of a shallow stream I saw on the bank, but almost hidden by undergrowth, the huge girth of what was apparently an immense snake, and, climbing the bank within a few feet of it, found it to be an ordinary python (*Python molurus* ?) lying gorged. From the size and shape of the 'bulge' I took it to be a Gyi, the four shoulder and hip angles being plainly visible and I called back to D. that it was a python with a Gyi* in it, asking him to come and lend a hand in hauling it down into the shallow stream, as not one of the Siamese-Shan coolies with us would touch it, even when it had been shot.

Having got it into shallow water I proceeded to cut open the belly down the ventral shields over the carcase within, with a Dah (the weapon between knife and sword used by all Burmans and Shans, etc., for every purpose). Expecting to come upon the reddish hair of a Gyi I was surprised to come upon a mottled scaly skin; and cutting further exposed a great clawed hand, whereupon I shouted back to D. who, like the coolies 'wasn't having any,' that it wasn't a Gyi but a young Crocodile inside and this I took it to be until I came to the head when I found that it was a monster Monitor Lizard (*Varanus* sp.).

Measurements carefully taken later by both of us with a steel tape gave the length of the Monitor as 5-ft. 9-ins. with a girth of 27-ins., (this after deflation; it was a very great deal more before being punctured, as decomposition had set in and it was greatly bloated, hence the enormous size it first appeared). The python was in perfect lustrous condition, having apparently but very recently shed a skin, and measured 14-ft. 11-ins. in length.

Now two things strike me as curious here. Firstly, that a python should attack a monitor at all, heavily armed as it is with powerful, sharp claws and a com-

* Muntjac or Barking Deer.